

Week Ending Friday, June 28, 1996

**Remarks at a Democratic National
Committee Dinner in Houston,
Texas**

June 21, 1996

Thank you. You know, after all these speeches, if I had any sense I would just quit while I'm ahead—[*laughter*—say, “Thank you very much. Everything they said is true; please show up in November.” [*Laughter*]

I am delighted to be back in Texas. I am very grateful for what Secretary—Senator Bentsen said. I told Lloyd when he was leaving the State, I said, “You know, I really miss you.” It was always a delight for me to see Lloyd and B.A. They were a part of our family, and he did a magnificent job as Treasury Secretary.

I want to thank Chairman Fowler for the vigor and energy that he has brought to this job, the passion. And he is absolutely tireless, and he has done a fine job and I am grateful to him. And I want to thank Bill White for leaving our administration—not for leaving our administration—[*laughter*—but for coming home to Texas to be the chair of the Democratic Party. I wish he hadn't left, but he's doing the right thing now that he's here.

I want to thank Bob and Elyse Lanier who have been such good friends to me and came to the airport to meet me today. And I think, since I have said it in other States, in other places, I might as well say it in Houston: I doubt very seriously that there is a mayor anywhere in America who has made as much difference in as little time and been more effective than Bob Lanier has. And it's a real credit to him.

I thank the Members of Congress who are here, Ken Bentsen and Jim Chapman and my good friend Martin Frost, who is going to give us a Democratic House again if we can just keep everybody rocking and rolling—Gene Green and Eddie Bernice Johnson and Sheila Jackson-Lee. And I'll just say one thing: You know, Supreme Court deci-

sions are the law of the land and all that, but it would be a real shame if we lost Sheila Jackson-Lee or Eddie Bernice Johnson or Martin Frost or anybody else who could be affected by that redistricting decision. And I hope they'll have a chance to run and win in November.

I want to thank all the former Governors who are here. I want to thank Dolph and Janie Briscoe for being so wonderful to Hillary when she came down to Uvalde to meet them. And I want you to know, Governor, I'm still wearing those socks you sent me that are made from your wool down there in Uvalde. And I'm—every time I go to the golf course I've got them on, and I show them to the other golfers. And I'm a one-man marketing agent for you. [*Laughter*] I expect income to double for all those folks down there in no time at all. I want to thank my good friend, Mark White. Mark was making fun of me for wearing boots tonight. He gave me a pair of boots in 1984 at the Governors' conference here. I've still got them, too.

I thank Lieutenant Governor Ben Barnes. I want to say a special word of thanks to Ann Richards, who has been a constant source of inspiration to me and to Hillary throughout these last 3½ years, who's always out there on the stump speaking up for our values and our causes, and who is still incredibly admired all around this great country and for very good reason.

I was glad to see Victor Morales here tonight and glad to see the hand you gave him and his family. And I want you to send him to the United States Senate. We need him there. I thank the other State officials who are here, Dan Morales and Martha Whitehead. And I want to say a special thanks to my longtime friend Gary Mauro for that very personal statement he made. It may have bored the rest of you, but I relived the last 25 years with every word he said. I don't think it could have—it was an eloquent statement not of my life, but of his commitment—

and his commitment to public service and to the people of Texas. And the thing I liked about listening to the speech is I've heard him say the same thing in private 100 times. He is a great resource for you, and I hope the people of Texas understand what they have in Gary Mauro.

I want to thank Speaker Jim Wright for coming tonight. I was delighted to see him, and I thank him for being here. I know I'm leaving some people out. I'm sure Liz Carpenter is here. If she's not, I'm mad at her. *[Laughter]* And I know my good friend Billie Carr is here. She says she got up out of bed to come, and I thought that was the right thing for her to do. *[Laughter]*

I'm sure there may be some other candidates for Congress here, but I can't help mentioning one, Nick Lampson, who's running to recapture Jack Brooks' seat. Boy, do we need a change there, and I want you to help him get elected.

And there's just one other thing—one other person I'd like to acknowledge who was and is about to become again a member of our administration: former Congressman and Commissioner Bob Krueger, who is about to go to Botswana but was in Burundi. And I want everybody here to know he put himself at not inconsiderable personal risk to save lots of people from the slaughter that went on in Burundi. And the people of Texas can be very proud of what he tried to do. And we thank you, sir. Thank you. *[Applause]*

Now, let me say most of what needs to be said, I guess, has been said. But this is a profoundly important election, and I want to just make three or four brief points. Four years ago when I came to Texas and I asked a lot of my friends to help me get elected—and Texas gave me a huge vote in the Democratic primary and propelled me on to the nomination, and we nearly won the general with a shoestring campaign—and let me just say, I've got to say this for the political writers. Normally, I never talk about the polls, but if anybody here thinks that I'm about to write off Texas, they need to think again, because I intend to fight for the electoral votes and the support of the people of Texas.

And I think we've got a pretty good case to make to the people of Texas. I've stood up for the things that mattered to the people

of Texas. I fought for NAFTA; I fought for the space program; I fought for a fair resolution of the supercollider after I lost my fight to keep it alive. And the people of Texas are better off today than they were 4 years ago, and they're a lot better off than they would have been if the other folks' policies had prevailed. That's a pretty simple case, and I think it's right.

I would say, too, of Governor Briscoe, we've had a good farm policy. Unfortunately, even a good farm policy can't make it rain. So I had to come down here to do that. *[Laughter]* But I'm glad we've rounded it out tonight, and we're going in the right direction.

I was reliving all this today coming in because I knew I'd see a lot of my friends. In the middle of 1991 I was home in Arkansas, having a wonderful time being Governor. My State was finally getting in pretty good shape economically and Hillary and I were having a great time. Our daughter was doing wonderfully well in her school and with her friends. And I really didn't know whether I wanted to make this race. And I finally decided to do it because I thought the country was drifting toward the future.

I had had a good relationship with President Bush and the White House; it hadn't been a particularly partisan thing. I had had the honor of representing the Democratic Governors in the Education Summit. I'd done a lot of work with them. But it just seemed to me that we could not drift into the 21st century, that we couldn't just assume that things would happen that would be good for the country. And we were having the slowest job growth since the Great Depression. We had quadrupled the debt of the country in 12 years and we were getting more divided racially and ethnically at a time when we plainly needed to come together. There was even some question of the support in our country for America's continued leadership in the world.

And I had three simple ideas that I thought we ought to take with us into the 21st century. First, and most important, I thought that we had to keep the American dream alive for everybody who was willing to work for it. Secondly, I believed that we had to make a virtue of our diversity, we had

to celebrate it, we had to come together in a stronger sense of community instead of being divided. Because it's plain that if we work together we'll do better than if we drift apart. And thirdly, I wanted to see our country continue to be the strongest force in the world for peace and freedom and prosperity.

And I thought if we had a strategy that said America's basic bargain is this: We'll work together to give everybody the opportunity to make the most of their own lives, and they have to assume the responsibility of being good citizens; and then we'll work together to bring this country together instead of being divided. And if we did it, I thought it would work.

In the economy, as Secretary Bentsen said, we had a simple strategy: To organize ourselves for the future; we said we're going to cut the deficit in half; we're going to expand trade dramatically; we're going to invest in the people of this country. And if we did it, we'd reduce the deficit in half in 4 years and create 8 million jobs. And as all of you remember, it was a very brutal fight to pass that economic program. It passed with the barest of margins. The Vice President had to vote for it in the Senate. Al Gore always says, "You know, whenever I vote, we win." [Laughter] So, sure enough, we did.

Well, now we've had 3½ years of that program. After we passed the economic program, we passed NAFTA in a heated fight. We passed the GATT bill in a heated fight. Our Trade Ambassador's negotiated 200 separate trade agreements. We have continued to invest. We've increased our investment in the infrastructure of America. We've increased our investment in technology and research and made educational opportunities more available to our people, even while reducing the size of the deficit.

Now, I just want to read you something. I had my staff give me this today. I thought you might find this interesting. When we voted on this strategy of ours back in 1993, the majority leader of the House, Mr. Arney, said of our plan, "Clearly, this is a job killer." The Speaker said, "This will lead to a recession next year, I believe." The head of the Budget Committee, Mr. Kasich, said, "This plan will not work. If it was to work I'd have

to become a Democrat." [Laughter] I'm saving a seat for him in Chicago. [Laughter]

The Senate majority leader, Senator Dole, said, "The American people know this plan does nothing to tackle the deficit head on." And your Senator, Mr. Morales' opponent, said, and I quote—now, don't use this in a campaign, Victor—here's what he said. "I want to predict here that if we adopt this bill," our economic program, "the American economy is going to get weaker, not stronger; the deficit 4 years from today will be higher than it is today, not lower."

Well, 3½ years later, we didn't cut the deficit in half, we cut it by more than half; the plan has not helped to create 8 million jobs, we've got 9.7 million new jobs. We were right, and they were wrong. And you ought to tell that in Texas. That's a fact. We also have nearly 4 million new homeowners, all-time high in the sales of American products abroad, all-time high for 3 years running in the creation of new businesses, the lowest combined rates of unemployment and inflation in 27 years.

So I say to you, we have not solved all the problems of the 21st century, but we're sure moving in the right direction. And if you compare where we are now to 4 years ago, we're better off. And if that's the test, we need to keep going in this direction and not change.

We had similar debates over what it meant to be responsible. One of the things that has driven me as long as I've been in public life, but especially these last few years, is that we've got to do something to lower the crime rate. You cannot have a democracy in which people are terrified any time they are not locked behind their own doors. And yet, I know that a lot of people believed that it couldn't be done. I believed that it could be. I saw what the mayor did here in his campaign when he put more police officers on the street. I went to communities in other cities where the crime rate had gone down when they put police officers back on the street and did the right thing.

And so we had a crime bill and we said, this is not real complicated, we're going to put 100,000 police on the street because crime's tripled in the last 30 years and the police force has only gone up by 10 percent.

But the police have to be deployed in the neighborhoods where the crime problem is, not behind desks. And we're going to ban 19 kinds of assault weapons, and we're going to pass the Brady bill. And we're going to pass the violence against women law to try to do something about the problem of domestic violence in this country, and we did.

Now, they made a lot of votes out of all that with all the fear and talk in 1994, because there hadn't been enough time to see whether it would bring any results and because there was so much turmoil. But you know something, since 1994 we've had two deer seasons, two duck seasons in Arkansas—[laughter]—and everybody who wants to kill deer or ducks has done it with the same dad-gum rifle they had before the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban passed. They've still got their guns. And all the old boys I grew up with who were mad at me 2 years ago now know that they were fed a line of bull. They feel they're just like where they were.

But I'll tell you one thing. There are 60,000—60,000—people with criminal records, stalkers, and other serious problems who have not been able to get handguns because they're ineligible when we went through the checking period of the Brady bill. That's who doesn't have a gun. The sportsmen and the hunters, they've still got them.

And we are going into—1996 will mark the 4th year in a row when the crime rate goes down in America. Now, is it low enough? Of course it's not. Of course it's not. I'll tell you when it will be low enough. We'll never get rid of crime because we can't transform human nature. That's not within our power. But you will know that we're on the right side of this issue when you turn on the evening news at night and you see a report of a crime, and instead of yawning and waiting for the next story, you're shocked again. You don't feel numb, you actually are surprised. We need to make crime the exception, not the rule. And we can do it if we follow smart policies.

If you look at this record, it is very important to remember that there was, unfortunately, especially in the leadership, a sharp partisan divide. And I think the evidence is

that our approach was right and they were wrong in what they said about it.

If you look at the welfare debate, everybody is for welfare reform. And, yes, I vetoed a bill that had that label on it—that label on it. But what do you want out of somebody on welfare anyway? Don't you want them to be like you? Don't you want people with children to be able to work and support themselves and be independent, to succeed at work and also—but don't you also want them to be able to succeed at home? I mean, isn't that the struggle that all working families are facing today? They want to be good at work, but they want to be good at home. Isn't that one of the major issues facing America today? If we have to choose between success at work and success at home, we have lost before we start. Isn't that right?

If you're so torn up and upset about your kids you can't function at work, that's going to hurt the economy. If you work like a demon and you neglect your children, what are we working for in the first place? So I said to them, I said, "You want to be tough on work? You cannot write the rules too tough for me. But make sure these people have jobs and child care and make sure their kids have medical care. And don't use the welfare reform bill to punish immigrants." And I want to thank the people of Texas, by the way, Democrats and Republicans alike, for having a more enlightened view on that than a lot of people in the Congress do. I appreciate that.

Well, we've had 3½ years of this now. We never could get a bill worked out. I still hope we will. We need one. So we just went out under authority given the President in 1988 and gave 40 States permission to have 62 experiments, which put 75 percent of the people on welfare under welfare reform anyway—moving people from welfare to work. Now, what have been the results? We got a 40-percent increase in child support collections. We got a million fewer people on food stamps. We have 1.3 million fewer people on welfare. I think the evidence speaks for itself. Our approach is working. We don't need to change it; we need to bear down and build on it. That's the way to do it.

We hear a lot of talk in Washington about family values and about character. Well, one

of the political tests is do you have the character to fight for my family's values. [*Laughter*] Now, we had a fight over whether the United States would become the 173d country or something like that—anyway, over 150 had done it before we did—to tell people they could have a little time off if they had a baby born or a sick parent without losing their jobs when we passed the family and medical leave law. Unfortunately, the leadership of the other party even fought us on that.

Well, we just had research done by a bipartisan group that said in the last 2 years over 12 million Americans had taken advantage of the family and medical leave law. Over 90 percent of the businesses said it cost them nothing or nearly nothing to comply. It was no hassle at all. And they certainly can't make a case that it cost jobs, since we've produced 9.7 million jobs through the American free enterprise system in the last 3 years. What a different world it would make.

Hardly a week goes by that I don't meet somebody, if I'm out and around seeing folks, that has taken advantage of the family and medical leave law. And I'll tell you, of all the stories I hear, when a person—when a father comes up to me, as it happened the other day in the White House; we had all the kids in the Children's Miracle Network there. You know, the kids from the children's hospitals telethons in each of the 50 States and their parents. And two sets of parents, as I shook hands with these kids and I was on the way out, stopped me and said, "My kid was desperately ill, and if it hadn't been for the family and medical leave law, I would have lost my job to care for my child." And that's wrong. And I am glad that that's the law of the land. We were right about that. We were right about that.

Now, I could go on and on. The same story applies to the V-chip and the new cable systems and giving parents more control over what their young children see. The same story applies to whether we should restrict advertising of tobacco products directed at young people. I know that's controversial. No President ever took that on before. But let me tell you something, it's illegal in every State in America for children to smoke. Three thousand kids start to smoke every day

illegally. One thousand of them will die sooner because of it. I think it's time the country took a position on it, took a stand on it, and made itself heard. I believe that.

So the second point I'd like to make, in addition to the fact that I think our approach has been right, is that you don't have to guess in this election. I mean, usually there's some guesswork involved in the election. You know, you know one person, you don't know the other. Maybe you don't know either one of them. People took a chance on me in '92, thank goodness. Thank you very much. [*Applause*] But look, this is great. You don't have to guess at all. You know what will happen. If they have the White House and the Congress, within 6 months of that occurring, the budget that I vetoed in 1995 will be the law of the land. And if that's what you think ought to be the law of the land, you've got a good way to get it.

If you really believe we ought to have a two-class Medicare system; if we ought to walk away from the guarantee we've given for 30 years to parents and children with disabilities, to poor children, to the elderly in nursing homes—stop guaranteeing that they'll have health care, even if they can't afford it; we ought to start cutting education funding instead of investing more in education; we ought to walk back on our commitment to a clean environment or a safe workplace, you can do that.

It's clear now. You don't even have to guess. It's great. There's no guesswork involved. You know what I'm going to do. You know what they're going to do. It would already be the law, but I vetoed it. So if you take the veto away, you can have the budget of 1995. I don't think that's good for America, and I think you ought to take the clear course and stay on the course we're on. And that's what I want you to tell the people of Texas. I don't think it would be good for Texans.

The final point I want to make is this: We have not solved problems. We have made them better. We are moving in the right direction. There's still a lot to do. If you imagine what the future is going to be like, young people today will have more possibilities to live out their dreams than any generation of Americans has ever had. But there will be

significant new challenges. The world will change much more rapidly.

There are young people in this audience today that 10 years from now will be doing jobs that have not even been invented yet, jobs that some of us cannot even imagine. And with the world changing we need to do some things that we haven't had to do in the past. We need a system to guarantee that people have lifetime access, for example, to education, to health care, and to pensions. That's a very important thing, even if they're in very small businesses, even if they're self-employed. That's what this fight for the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill is about. That's what the recommendations I've made to Congress to give self-employed people and small-business people the opportunity to take out pensions and people the opportunity to keep their pensions even if they lose their jobs for a while.

These are important changes because the world is changing. The most important thing I've asked is that Congress change the law to give families a tax deduction for the cost of college tuition and to guarantee that every American can get a tax credit equal to what it costs to go to community college so we can make universal not just a high school education but 2 years of education after high school. These are the kinds of things we need to be looking to the future for.

So we had a plan. We've implemented it. The results were good. You don't have to guess in the election; there are two very different choices. I believe you know that the alternative would not be good. And, most importantly, we're going to run a positive campaign with good ideas for the future of the United States.

Let me ask you to think as I leave about this choice and these terms. If you were lucky enough to know right before you leave this Earth, the last time you put your head on a pillow that it was your last time, what would you be thinking about? You wouldn't be thinking, I wish I spent more time at the office. *[Laughter]* And, frankly, you probably wouldn't be thinking, I wish I'd spent more time on politics. You'd be thinking about your children and the people you love and the people you cared about, the things that

really mattered in your life. The purpose of politics is simply to give people the space they need to make those memories, and to remind people that you can't really make those memories unless you give other people the same chance and accord them the same respect, even if they're really different from you.

Now, that's really the purpose—and to stop countries and other destructive forces from taking advantage of us and killing the innocent and snuffing out their dreams. That's really what it's all about. And I believe with all my heart. I don't care about the voting patterns of the past or history and everything. If on election day the American people go into the polling booth thinking about that, what is the purpose of this whole exercise, they'll do the right thing.

The best days of this country are ahead of us. The next century will contain untold possibilities. But we have to meet these challenges and protect our values, and we've got to do it together. That's what this election is all about. And I just want to ask you to commit to spend some time, as much time as you can between now and November, talking to your friends and neighbors about it, because we are going to take a path of change into the 21st century. There is no status quo option. And I want us to walk across a bridge that will take us all there together, better and stronger than ever.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:12 p.m. at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Donald L. Fowler, co-chairman, Democratic National Committee; Mayor Bob Lanier of Houston, TX, and his wife, Elyse; former Texas Gov. Ann Richards; Dan Morales, State attorney general; Martha Whitehead, State treasurer; Gary Mauro, State land commissioner; former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Jim Wright; Liz Carpenter, Democratic activist; and Billie Carr, member, executive council, Texas Democratic Party. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on Gulf War Illnesses

June 21, 1996

In March 1995, I announced my intention to leave no stone unturned in our efforts to determine the causes of the illnesses being experienced by veterans of the Gulf war and to provide effective medical care to those who are ill. Since that time, we have been pursuing a wide range of initiatives on Gulf war illnesses, including re-examining intelligence and operational records for evidence of possible exposure to chemical or biological weapons.

As part of this ongoing effort, the Department of Defense, based partly on information brought to its attention by the United Nations Special Commission, has confirmed that, shortly after the war, U.S. troops destroyed an Iraqi ammunition bunker that contained chemical weapons. Chemical detectors were used by U.S. troops both before and during the destruction operation. While we have no evidence today that Americans were exposed to chemical weapons during the operation, this is a very important issue which we will continue to investigate thoroughly.

The release of this new information reflects my commitment to unraveling the Gulf war illnesses problem. We will continue to work closely with the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses to ensure that we are doing everything possible to address the health consequences of service in the Persian Gulf. We will also continue to make new information on this important issue available to veterans and their families.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

June 22, 1996

Good morning. Today I want to talk with you about keeping our families safe and secure, and especially about how we can help parents to protect their children.

Since I took office we've worked hard to combat the crime and violence that has become all too familiar to too many Americans.

We passed a sweeping crime bill in 1994, against steep opposition from partisan politicians and special interest group pressure. We're now putting 100,000 new police officers on America's streets in community policing. Nearly half of them are already funded. We banned 19 deadly assault weapons, passed the Violence Against Women Act to help our communities resist domestic violence. We passed the Brady bill, and already it's stopped over 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from buying a gun.

We're helping our communities give children something to say yes to, positive programs and good role models to help them stay away from crime and drugs and gangs. These laws are making a real difference across our country. In city after city and town after town, crime and violence are finally coming down. Crime is coming down this year overall in America for the 4th year in a row. But we all know we've got a long way to go before our streets are safe again.

And as we move forward, we have to remember we're not just fighting against crime, we're fighting for something: for peace of mind, for the freedom to walk around the block at night and feel safe, for the security of neighborhoods that aren't plagued by drugs, where you can leave your doors unlocked and not worry about your children playing in the yard. We're fighting to restore a sense of community, and most of all, we're fighting for our children and their future.

Nothing is more important than keeping our children safe. We have taken decisive steps to help families protect their children, especially from sex offenders, people who, according to study after study, are likely to commit their crimes again and again. We've all read too many tragic stories about young people victimized by repeat offenders. That's why, in the crime bill, we required every State in the country to compile a registry of sex offenders and gave States the power to notify communities about child sex offenders and violent sex offenders that move into their neighborhoods.

But that wasn't enough, and last month I signed Megan's Law that insists that States tell a community whenever a dangerous sexual predator enters its midst. Too many children and their families have paid a terrible